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# SARAH BERNHARDT



SARAH BERNHARDT  
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# Sarah Bernhardt

Her Artistic Life







*Theresa Bernhardt*



# Sarah Bernhardt

HER ARTISTIC LIFE

By A. Gallus

With Numerous Autograph Pages

Especially Written by

Mme. Bernhardt

Profusely Illustrated



New York

R. H. RUSSELL

1901



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ROBERT HOWARD RUSSELL



HAMLET.





LA TOSCA.



L'AIGLON.





L' AIGLON.



HOTEL SAVOY

FIFTH AVENUE & FIFTY NINTH STREET,

NEW YORK.

Vous me demandez quelques lignes  
pour mettre en tête d'un volume que  
vous préparez. Je voudrais bien en  
faire un peu difficile, car ce volume  
sera agréable pour moi et vous aura  
l'air de l'avoir écrit par complaisance,  
ou il sera peu aimable et vous aurez  
l'air de commettre une trahison. Vous  
me demandez quelques renseignements sur  
moi, sur mon enfance : on en a raconté  
tant de mille dont la plupart sont faux ;  
je rétablirai la vérité dans mes mémoires  
que je publierai d'ici deux ans ; mais  
pursuivez votre livre et faites pour parachever  
l'ouvrage, soyez l'écho de mes senti-  
ments pour cette admirable, étonnante  
nation. C'est la quatrième tournée que je  
fais en Amérique, et je reste confondu de  
des progrès formidables, des progrès de  
publier. La première fois que je vins en  
ce pays, il y a, je crois, 16 ans. ~~Quelques~~  
~~je dirais~~ dans l'ancien état de la



HOTEL SAVOY  
FIFTH AVENUE & FIFTY-NINTH STREET,  
NEW YORK

2

au bout de quelques minutes, je m'arrêtai  
inquiète, troublée par un bruit bizarre,  
une minute après, le bruit reprenant -  
ou lent-dit-on (Chut) poussé par mille  
voix étouffées, enfin à la troisième fois, je  
me rendis compte du bruit. Toutes les  
dames tenaient à la main un livre,  
sous lequel elles suivaient la pièce  
traduite en anglais; le bruit-des feuilles  
qu'elles tournaient-toutes ensemble natu-  
rellement, causait ce bruit étrange  
qui m'avait en instant causé hésitation  
sur son vrai sens. La seconde fois que  
je vins en Amérique, il y a dix ans, la  
majorité des dames suivaient sans livres  
la troisième fois, j'en distinguais à peine  
quelques dix à quinze, et cette année pas  
une, entendez-vous, pas une voix  
suivie dans le bruit. Je trouve cela  
confondant & admirable. On m'a cause  
en général d'être très-partiale pour l'Amérique.  
C'est-à-dire que je ne puis me défendre



HOTEL SAVOY

FIFTH AVENUE & FIFTY-NINTH STREET,

NEW YORK.

3

D'une extrême sympathie pour le peuple  
bon, vivant, vibrant, toujours ouvert  
aux inventions nouvelles, toujours prêt  
à accueillir la science, l'art, le génie,  
celui qui s'est fait son patron. on l'adore ce  
pays où la femme est reine, rien absolu,  
elle va, vient, ordonne, proclame, exige,  
insiste, dépense follement et ne  
dit jamais, merci, ce qui révolte  
beaucoup de gens, et une charmante.  
Et y a-t-il rien de plus bête que merci,  
les gens ne sont-ils pas remerciés par  
le fait même du plaisir qu'ils  
font ou du service qu'ils rendent? Ah!  
ne trouvez les femmes heureuses en  
Amérique! une très-jolie femme que j'ai  
rencontrée dans le monde, réputée  
pour sa beauté, son esprit et ses livres,  
s'est tout-à-coup dans le feu de la  
conversación; mais, Madame Bernhardt,  
vous trouvez que vous souvenez trop respectées,  
vos maris sont toujours au travail, depuis,



Le matin presque soir ! Il y est vrai  
d'êtres, ayant en cette femme  
sentiment, quel si je devais avoir mon  
marriage toute la journée, j'aimerais  
mieux y renoncer. J'ai demandé  
à ces deux dames de conclure, elles  
n'ont pas conclu. Alors ? Une  
remarque nouvelle que j'ai faite entre  
elles, c'est la rapidité avec laquelle  
le goût ~~antique~~ a changé littérairement  
a changé. Il y a quelques années, ~~littérature~~  
~~la littérature~~ les pièces à action, à  
émotion, à clou enfin, étaient les  
pièces préférées, la littérature n'avait rien  
à y voir. aujourd'hui le public américain  
ne veut plus, et il demande plus qu'une  
émotion banale d'un enfant retrouvé  
ou d'une scène d'empoisonnement, il veut qu'il  
ressorte un enseignement. On pourrait  
dire choses ; il est charmé par une belle  
pensée, et il reste plus ému par  
une idée nouvelle émise simplement  
que par le corps de l'œuvre ou la  
révélation d'un criminel. L'esprit des  
femmes s'est élevé à un degré surpre-  
nant ; elles savent beaucoup de choses  
et les savent bien. Elles sont moins  
superficielles que nous, et si elles causent  
beaucoup chiffons, elles rêvent beaucoup  
de choses sérieuses, beaucoup de femmes



8  
toutes féministes, bien ceus; elles restent  
nos femmes, ce que ne restent pas nos  
garçons qui demandent l'émancipation  
du féminin et font prendre cette  
émancipation en haine. Une chose  
que je regrette. C'est qu'on ne fasse pas  
un conservatoire; il y a ici une  
quantité d'artistes qui demandent  
un peu d'enseignement pour devenir  
d'admirables artistes, hommes et femmes.  
S'il y avait un conservatoire en  
Amérique, les étoiles étrangères ne  
trouveraient plus rien et il y en aurait  
plus place pour les compagnies étrangères  
et les jeunes artistes américains seraient  
leur ~~la~~ rite des (stars) de premier  
grandeur. Elles sont presque toutes folles,  
gracieuses, et il faudrait un rien pour  
pondérer leur exagération. ~~et leur~~ Un  
un d'école jointe à leur grâce naturelle  
leur amour de l'esthétique, et l'Amérique  
considérerait les premiers artistes du monde.  
Comment se fait-il qu'il n'y ait pas  
un groupe de personnes riches et autori-  
sées pour fonder un conservatoire?  
Enfin, je ne sais pas si je revivrai en  
Amérique, mais j'en ai grand espoir, et  
j'y reviens, de voir mon beau  
Réalisme; c'est au nom des jeunes artistes,

6  
que je propose à .C. : un Conservatoire  
un Conservatoire ! C'est au nom d'un  
théâtre américain qui peut et doit  
se suffire à lui-même, c'est au  
nom de la littérature où on trouve  
des auteurs américains, dont quelques-uns  
ont un véritable et immense  
talent ; et on peut faire jouer leurs  
œuvres ; enfin c'est au nom d'un  
public lui-même qui serait  
heureux et fier d'applaudir ses  
artistes et ses auteurs. Les compagnies  
~~européennes~~ ~~proposées~~ ~~quant~~ ~~aux~~  
~~musées~~

Charles Sumner

N. Y.

TRANSLATION OF THE AUTOGRAPH PAGES  
OF MME. SARAH BERNHARDT.

You ask me, Monsieur, for a short preface to a book which you are publishing. ❀ It will not be very easy to content you. ❀ If you have spoken kindly of me, my compliance with your request may lead some people to suppose that you were prompted by a wish to please me when you wrote your book. ❀ And, on the other hand, if you have been ill-natured, your action may appear perfidious. ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀

You ask me to supply you with some information about myself and my childhood. ❀ Innumerable stories have been printed about both, and most are false. ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀

In my memoirs, which I mean to publish two years hence, I shall correct these untruths. ❀ But as your book is to be issued in America, you may express my feelings with regard to this amazing and most admirable nation. ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀

I am making my fourth tour in America. ❀ The extraordinary progress of this public has astounded me. ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀

When I came here first, some sixteen years ago, I made my début as Adrienne. ❀ At the end of a few minutes I was disconcerted and alarmed by a strange noise. ❀ Five minutes later the same noise disturbed me. ❀ It sounded like the dull and muffled hissing of a multitude. ❀ I heard the sound a third time, and at last I understood what had been troubling me. ❀ The ladies in the house had all come armed with copies of the play, and as they turned the leaves they made the rustling sound which seemed so terrible. ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀

On the occasion of my second visit to this country, some ten years ago, about half the women in my audiences managed to dispense with books. ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀

When for the third time I appeared here, at most ten or fifteen of them had brought copies of the play with them; and this year not one woman — not a single one — had any need of books. ❀ This seems to me no less remarkable than admirable. ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀



I have been taxed with being very partial to America. ♡ I see no reason to deny that I am heartily in sympathy with this free, vigorous, vibrant people, which is so quick to welcome new inventions, science, art and genius, irrespective of their origin. ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ Yes, I adore this country, in which Woman reigns, and reigns so absolutely. ♡ She comes and goes. ♡ She orders, wills, exacts, instructs, spends money recklessly, and gives no thanks. ♡ This shocks some people, but it only charms me. ♡ What is more idle than a "thank you"? ♡ As if one were not thanked enough by the mere pleasure that one gets in doing service to a woman! ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ Ah, American women are fortunate! ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ A very pretty woman whom I met here in society — she was renowned not only for her beauty but also for her wit and literary gifts — once broke out with this remark: ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ "But, Mme. Bernhardt, we think we are too much respected. ♡ Our husbands work incessantly from morning till night." ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ "That's true," exclaimed another lady. ♡ "But I would rather do without a husband than have him dangling after me all day." ♡ ♡ ♡ I asked them for their last word on the subject. ♡ They were silent. Well, what of it? ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ Another thing which has impressed me here is the quickness with which the literary taste of your people has changed. ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ A few years ago the plays you seemed to like best were those in which action, emotion and what we call "le clou" were everything. ♡ For the literary side of plays you cared nothing. ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ Now, however, the American public wants to think. ♡ It demands more than the comparatively trite excitement caused by the discovery of a long-lost child, or a poisoning scene. ♡ It wants an insight into the true inwardness of things. ♡ A fine idea charms it, and it is more deeply touched by a new thought, uttered simply, than by an assassination or the revelation of a hidden crime. ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ The intelligence of your women has asserted itself in a surprising way. Your women know a great deal, and what they do know they know

thoroughly. ♡ They are less superficial than we are, and, though they discuss dress so much, they dream of serious things. ♡ Many of them are journalists or doctors, and, unlike our own viragoes who shriek for woman's rights until they make themselves abhorred, they contrive to be withal true women. ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡

I regret that you have no Conservatory here as yet. ♡ Many of your men and women only need a little training to become good artists. If you had a Conservatory in America there would be no room here for foreign companies, and some of your young actresses would soon develop into "stars" of the first magnitude. ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡

Nearly all of them are pretty and attractive. ♡ Their tendency to overact might easily be cured. ♡ A little training, with their natural grace and love of the aesthetic to help it, would enrich America with the best artists in the world. ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡

How is it that there are not a few rich, influential people here to found a Conservatory? ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡

I do not know if I shall ever come back to America. ♡ But, if I do, I most devoutly hope my dream will have been realized. ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡

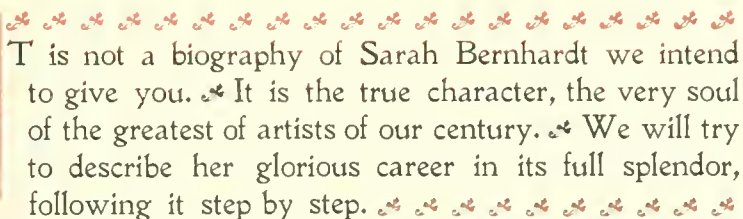
In the name of your young artists I cry out for "A Conservatory, a Conservatory!" ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡

I make this appeal for the sake of the American stage, which should and could support itself. ♡ I make it on behalf of American literature and of American authors, some of whom, despite their real and striking talent, cannot now get their plays interpreted. ♡ I make it, lastly, in the name of this public, which is longing to applaud its own artists and its own writers. ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡

SARAH BERNHARDT.







At the outset of her career, and ever since, when ignorance or prejudice has misunderstood or perverted her intentions with the potent weapons of ridicule and calumny, she has always disdained to see or to engage in the contest; her eyes resting on the “beyond” which beckoned her forward in her artist dreams, she would advance, calm and smiling, to merited triumphs, ignoring petty malignity about her path.

To act side by side with this illustrious tragedienne has been the dream of all actors of talent. ♣ To have their literary creations incarnated by her has been the first object of all dramatic authors. ♣ Shortly before his fatal illness, Alexandre Dumas asked that Sarah





The queer but captivating little girl was a dreamy soul, for she already felt her irresistible vocation sprouting and developing day by day; the vocation for the stage! ♣ Ah! some day she too would become famous; she also would see a public worshipping at her feet! Yes! she also would interpret the masterpieces of Corneille, Racine, Shakespeare and Victor Hugo. ♣ ♣ ♣



AT EIGHTEEN YEARS OF AGE.

Sarah was transferred without delay from the convent to the Conservatory of Elocution. ♣ Trusting in her star, she dared to confront there the awe-inspiring Jury with a simple fable of La Fontaine: "The Two Pigeons." ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣

Never before had such audacity been seen; but never before had La Fontaine been interpreted as he was that day! ♣ ♣ ♣

It was no longer a fable; an entire drama was acted by this pale little creature before the members of the Jury. ♣ Struck with stupefaction, the President, the world-known Auber, was dumbfounded: "What a lovely voice," he said to his neighbor,

Legouvè, "she ought to enter the singing classes; what a Zerlina for my 'Fra Diavolo,' and how charming she would be in 'Angèle' or the 'Domino Noir'!" ♣ How she has recited that fable, gentlemen!" he said, turning to the other members of the Jury. ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ She was received unanimously. ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣



[illegible]



the most difficult and dissimilar rôles, Iphigenia in the "Aulide" of Racine and the Valérie of Scribe. ♡ Leaving the Conservatory on the fourth of August she was obliged to make her début the following week. ♡ Such hasty preparation exposed her artistic career to a brief existence, which was truly the covert desire of many; for Sarah's artistic promise had even then created enemies, that the zeal she displayed in her work only confirmed. ♡ She made her début almost without a rehearsal. ♡ The evening of the first representation she was so agitated and excited, that her instructor, Provost, standing beside her in the wings, would push her on the stage. ♡ But, when facing the audience, she quickly regained her assurance to achieve immense success. ♡ Francisque Sarcey, in describing the representation, said: "Mlle. Bernhardt appeared for the first time in 'Iphigenia.' ♡ She is a tall, handsome woman, and very attractive; the upper part of her face is remarkably beautiful; she carries herself admirably and pronounces with perfect clearness." ♡ ♡ ♡ She had succeeded! ♡ But then followed fast the outburst of hatred, of which she was the victim; it took this expression: To think that a new-comer, a mere child, had dared to tread a stage like the Comédie Française; to attempt the leading parts, and from the



AN ENGRAVING BY LOUISE ABBEA.

start had pleased both the public and the press. ♡ Her enemies managed their intrigues so artfully, that Sarah was soon relegated to obscurity. No longer cast for the principal rôles, she became hopeless under the stress of forced inaction. ♡ Yet her courage did not fail, for she accepted the result as long as she could; but, finally, patience gave out: for one day, at the Comédie Française, unable to restrain her indignation, she slapped the face of Mlle. Nathalie, her archenemy, who

was making sport of her before her companions. ♡ This was the third and last rôle that Sarah played during her first engagement at the Comédie Française, which lasted nine months; nevertheless one must admire her force of character. ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ From the beginning of her career Sarah conquered the public by her

There were those who tried to close the doors of the Paris theatres to her; but she forced them open.

A black and white photograph of a woman sitting on a bench. She is wearing a light-colored bonnet, a dark long-sleeved dress, and a light-colored apron. She is holding a bottle in her right hand. To her left is a large, dark, textured object, possibly a bag or a basket. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

to stir again Sarah's indignation to its depths, and spur her to acts of violence. ♡ Nevertheless, she found the way through unimportant rôles to reveal her great talent, particularly when substituted for some famed artist who, prevented from playing, gave her the opportunity. ♡ Soon, however, when grown weary of her unfriendly surroundings, she left the Gymnase, and after being idle for some time, obtained at last an engagement at the Odéon. ♡ Here Mlle. Bernhardt was finally able to display her extraordinary gifts and impress herself upon the Parisian public. ♡ What beautiful productions were those of Britannicus, of Athalie, of Kean, François le Champi ! Francisque Sarcey, although the champion of the Comédie Française, was yet judicial enough to say of her, following her success in "King Lear": "She has, if she is willing to work, a splendid future before her." ♡ He should have added, "provided, she obtain the parts suited to her marvelous talent." ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡





At last, her "creation" of Zanetto in "Le Passant" of François Coppée was the opportunity to realize most cherished dreams and establish her primacy. ✧ François Coppée, but twenty-seven then, was as yet obscure; he belonged to a family of small employés, his father having made great sacrifices that the gifted son might acquire an education. ✧ Unfortunately François, as a student, was in poor health, and was obliged to discontinue his studies before they were completed. ✧ When his health returned he obtained a modest government appointment in a bureau, wherein his father was holding a small situation; but François Coppée, burning with thirst for knowledge, effected his own education by study and reading during the evenings, after office hours. ✧ By nature a singer of rhymes, he wrote fugitive pieces which saw the light in second-class magazines, only to pass promptly into neglect; but a happy fate befell one of those pieces when it caught the eye of that excellent artiste of the Odéon, Mlle. Agar, whose death occurred in recent years. ✧ Without knowing its author, Mlle. Agar declaimed Coppée's piece ("la Bénédiction") with pronounced success at matinéés and in salons. ✧ At last she visited Coppée to ask that he write a play for her, for the Théâtre de l'Odéon, offering to charge herself with everything pertaining to it. ✧ Thus it was that Mlle. Agar brought forward François Coppée. He wrote for her "Le Passant," which was produced at the Odéon. ✧ This charming idyl, which takes scarcely half an hour to enact, and contains but two



LE PASSANT.

characters, crowned two persons with honor: first, its author, till then unknown; but not second, the good patroness Mlle. Agar, who played the part of Sylvia. ♣ The twin honor fell upon Sarah Bernhardt, to whom the author had assigned the boy's part of



LAST DRAWING OF VICTOR HUGO.

Zanetto. ♣ When Sarah stepped into the scene in her graceful disguise as a Florentine page, and when, with that melodiously musical, caressing voice, she began in whispers that delightful love verse, the house burst into applause, wild and enthusiastic. ♣ The next day Paris found but two subjects of conversation: Sarah Bernhardt and François Coppée. ♣ "Le Passant" achieved immediate renown, not only for theatre audiences, but within the most exclusive salons. ♣ The Parisians were enthusiastic over it everywhere. ♣ Sarah Bernhardt had

now borne for seven years the courage and resignation which was to disarm and vanquish envy—seven years lost to art and the artist! Yet this bewildering triumph did not turn her head; she carried herself like the born heir to a crown, who assumes it merely to return more earnestly than ever to nobler work. ♣ Having conquered the first rank, it is necessary not only to keep there, but to climb higher. Ambitious dreams now beset her of conferring lustre upon French dramatic art, then languishing through need of new poetic food. Now began for the admirable artist a life of untiring labor and activity. ♣ Adding success to success, she represented in her own person the multiform traits of La Dumesnil, or La Clairon, which had been the glories of Mlles. Mars and Rachel. ♣ Victor Hugo, the king of modern French dramatists, happy to find in Sarah Bernhardt the artist he had hoped for, proposed that she revive his *Ruy Blas*. ♣ She accepts, and through her peerless talent resuscitates the public taste for the dramas of the romantic school. ♣ Then followed the general infatuation, when Paris went wild over the extraordinary







woman. ♣ Every trait of hers contributed to feed the fascination she had bred within the public mind. ♣ At that period of her life, Sarah's slenderness had become proverbial. ♣ Slight as was her figure, and spare as was her flesh, they yet provided inexhaustible food for caricaturists and for comic allusion. ♣ Her regular features of classical cut recalled in softened lines something of the Dutch traits of her mother. ♣ But that which gave to Sarah's face its unique and fascinating char-

acter — her eyes — these, her long, strange, superb eyes, of which the pupils seemed to change their color with variations of light, as if to accent the changes of her physiognomy: They seemed like old gold when the artist was dreaming; or like light green when anger contracted her brow, and dark blue when smiling. ♣ But, strangest of all, they seemed to disappear from light unto dullness when death was to be portrayed. ♡

Fashion now followed to consecrate the general infatuation; for years everything was "à la Sarah Bernhardt."

La Comédie Française came to apologize and to beg her return to the stage of the "Rue de Richelieu." ♣ She consented. ♣ But, no sooner there, Sarah found the old enmity reviving and enveloping her as when it had effected her departure. ♣ Sarah began her répertoire with "Mlle. de Belle-Isle," in which she could display but few of her admirable qualities; yet the intrigues of her colleagues were soon frustrated by the brilliant success she secures in the "Sphinx," of Octave



SARAH AS A BUTTERFLY.

Feuilleton, which contained two leading rôles, created by her and Mlle. Croizette. ✱ Francisque Sarcey wrote upon the occasion: "It was Sarah who carried off the suffrages of the connoisseurs. ✱ She acted with a noble and discreet charm, which was the more striking as her rival allowed herself to be carried away by her temperament. Sarah Bernhardt had but little to say in the first two acts, still she found the means to arouse wild applause by a few words—by a gesture of the hand. ✱ The last act belonged to her. ✱ Having the sympathetic part as impersonating the outraged wife who forgives, she displayed an indescribable vehemence of passion in declaiming these words: "You wish to know if I have letters," articulated clearly and cuttingly; each word fell from her quivering lips like a separate arrow whizzing through the air.

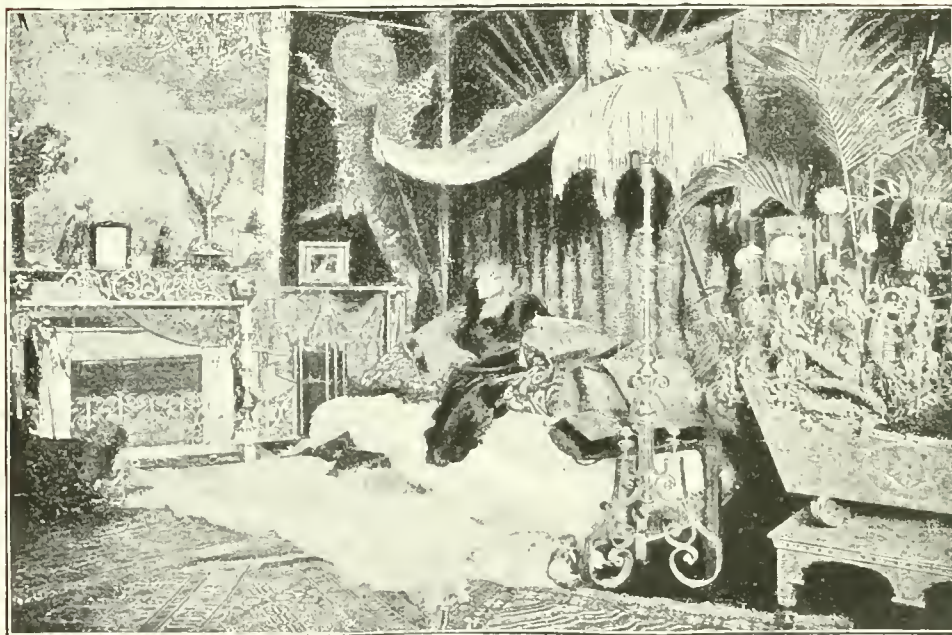
Sarah, now the first favorite of the public, the war between mediocrity and genius was no longer to be fought, it was terminated; her power was to manifest itself in "*Phèdre*"; she dealt in "*Phèdre*" the master-stroke of her career. ✱ Even the fastidious Sarcey found her comparable with Rachel—but only in certain places, and superior to her illustrious predecessor in others; yet all Paris went to see "*Phèdre*," who hardly expected such honor. ✱ Even now it is but necessary to announce the revival of that tragedy to attract a full house. ✱ Ah! was not Racine born too soon! What enjoyment he missed; what royalties he would have obtained in our day!

Sarah gave this lucrative occupation to the author, Mr. Henri de Bornier, presenting a new character as "*La fille de Roland*." ✱ After this success she appears as Mrs. Clarkson in "*L'étrangère*," by Alexandre Dumas Fils. ✱ What variety of talent that can multiply itself to secure a victory with every battle!

The great master, Dumas, grew fond of the artist, the siren who



could impart to her creations such personal charm. ♣ He tied her to himself with bonds of an aesthetic friendship that never relaxed. Between those two geniuses were the links of grand affinities of both talent and character. ♣ He also was generous to excess, and as independent. ♣ It was after a revival of "La Dame aux Camélias" (Camille), from which Dumas had reaped a hundred thousand francs, when he learned that Sarah was a prey to financial anxieties. How could it be otherwise? ♣ She was always giving without restraint, doing good to all around her; she had exhausted her funds and become the victim of usurers. ♣ Dumas visited the director of the theatre where Sarah was then playing. ♣ "Sarah," said the renowned master, "has just won a hundred thousand francs for me; I return them to you 'for her.' ♣ I do not wish this great artist to be poor; she who enriches others." ♣ Dumas had the nobleness to offer it, Sarah the pride to refuse it. ♣ But these two strong personalities esteemed each other all the more. ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣



SARAH BERNHARDT'S BOUDOIR.



**S**URING seven years in unbroken order Sarah created one part after another at the Théâtre Française, only to captivate her audiences. ♣ She would thrill the public heart with Posthumia in "Rome Vanquished," or stir its soul with Hernani's "Doña Sol," or melt the lovers of the classique with "Andromaque"; she is queen from the top of her head to the tip of her toes in "Ruy Blas." ♣ Nor is this impression of true sovereignty enshrined apart on the mimic stage; she carries it everywhere and makes her presence felt. ♣ Crowned heads accept her, in the rank her superiority establishes, as their equal, a queen by right of genius and rare intelligence. ♣ No language is more fascinating than her acute and sprightly conversation in which in the most discreet way she shows her rare intellectual culture. ♣ While Sarah, during her septennate, thus attracted the public to the Comédie Française, her situation was steadily growing more annoy-



ing; contentions with the administration had become too frequent. ♣ Characters best suited to her were given to less competent favorites of the moment. Indignant over such injustice, Sarah resigned her position, under an irrevocable resolve never again to act on the boards of the Comédie Française. ♣ This famed theatre, however, to revenge itself, as it seems, tried to strike back and obstruct the future productiveness of a gold mine which had so long enriched it. ♣ Sarah, like the other "sociétaires" of the company, had deposited into the reserve fund about a hundred thousand francs, in prospect of her sometime resignation, and these





*Nadar, Paris*

HERNANI.

were confiscated. ♣ In addition, she was made to pay an indemnity of another hundred thousand francs. ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣

The world undoubtedly approves admiringly the Comédie Française which, since its foundation in 1680, has supplied the capital of the theatrical world almost uninterruptedly with the most eminent artists, and which seems to give eternal youth and beauty to French dramatic art. ♣ But admiration does not prevent the regret that some of its statutes, dating back more than two hundred years, still govern in their original force as they were conceived by Colbert, the celebrated minister of Louis XIV. ♣ Times have changed since then. ♣ Why claims the Comédie Française still her ancient right to exact that every "sociétaire," leaving either before or after his or her retirement, shall never again tread the boards of any Parisian stage. ♣ This precaution, taken presumably to assure the future of the first French dramatic stage, was indeed needed at its foundation, when true artists were rare and competition meant danger. ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣

But to-day, why seek to deprive the Parisian public of the representations of a Coquelin because he has retired, or of a Sarah Bernhardt because she refused to continue under conditions unjust and annoying? ♣ Here is a field for reform and one which would be in the interest of French dramatic art. ♣ As the Comédie Française proved an unmerciful creditor, Sarah Bernhardt paid to the last centime. Her financial situation being almost exhausted, she undertook her first triumphal career in America. ♣ Partisans of the Comédie Fran-



JACQUINTE CL. A. DRAWIN.  
SARAH BERNHARDT.



*Nadar, Paris.*

HERNANI.

cause, growing clamorous now, filled the newspaper columns with their contempt. ♣ To them she was no longer the divine Sarah, devoted to her art. ♣ She had become a vulgar comédienne, ruled by money. ♣ No abatement of the provocations that the illustrious tragédienne had received at the hands of the Comédie Française was noticed. ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ Yet Sarah was leaving to replenish her exhausted funds, worshiping her art too truly to neglect it for one moment, in spite of all material preoccupations. ♣ Besides, she knew that on this side of the Atlantic she would find herself in the presence of an audience as exacting as the

Parisian public. ♣ For several years past nearly all the great artists of Europe had, being warmly received, won American laurels. ♣ ♣ ♣ The artistic education of America had made rapid progress, and Sarah recognized the fact that she would be judged by connoisseurs. ♣ Hence she endeavored to give a still more artistic, and especially a more personal finish to her talent than she had ever done before. ♣ Can Sarah be inferior to Sarah? ♣ And, after each of her returns from America, the Parisians came to applaud her enthusiastically. ♣ They were frank to discern that her dramatic power, far from diminishing, had grown in intensity. ♣ If Francisque Sarcey himself could be present at one of the fervent performances she gives in America, he would experience the same emotions and joys he feels and chronicles from his often-described fauteuil at the Comédie Française. ♣ One day, it was during a previous visit here, Sarah played at a matinée. ♣ It was a stormy day; the slippery sidewalks frightened the New Yorkers from venturing out. ♣ The performance took place to empty benches—to very few spectators. ♣ The individuals present felt keenly humiliated and awaited the appear-





ance of the great artist with apprehension. ♣ “Will she not be too discouraged to act,” they anxiously asked themselves. ♣ At last, she appears; it was “Jeanne d’Arc.” ♣ To the great pleasure of the handful present, the illustrious tragédienne advances resplendent, glorious as always, and growing more and more enthralled with her part, she spoke her pathetic lines with an intensity equal, if not superior, to any she had ever bestowed upon the most brilliant house. ♣ A delighted few went to compliment her after the representation. ♣ “How could you spend your energy and exhaust yourself for such a small audience?” ♣ She answered vivaciously: “I played with veritable passion to show my gratitude to the few who braved the storm to hear me.” ♣ This reply shows Sarah Bernhardt’s very self. ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣

There were some who, in anticipation of her departure, shed crocodile tears, and, alas! shed them in vain. ♣ Beside, they took good care not to speak of the principal motive which impelled her to leave Paris. She was a mother, and an admirable one. Should she not safeguard the interests of her son, then but a boy, and assure his future? ♣ To satisfy the insatiable greed of her creditors was not a sufficient reason. ♣ She had, moreover, to guard her child against possible poverty, and she bravely faces this double duty. ♣ Whatever her enemies may say of her, she has done, and always will do, her duty under any circumstances. ♣ ♣ ♣

Sarah never quarreled about the jests that were printed upon the subject of her vagaries. ♣ She was the first to be amused with the spiritual caricatures that the leading draughtsmen produced, for her temperament is extremely joyous and she detests vulgar amusement. She found it as diverting to attempt the domesticating of a lioness or a tigress as another woman would to shine in a chef-d’oeuvre of her dressmaker. ♣ At another time she made a balloon ascension in preference to the commonplace airing in the Bois de Boulogne. ♣ But it was always a risk if a scribbler attacked her honor for any shameless speculative purpose, for she would defend her fireside — her most cherished possession. ♣ When slanderers have made her heart bleed, no



SARAH AND SARCEY. BY CARAN D'ACHE.



petty consideration of etiquette restrains her. ♣ She will punish in her own way. ♣ She considers it a social duty in not granting immunity to infamy. ♣ Of course, she is then accused of doing all this to advertise herself. ♣ Is advertising needed when one's name is Sarah Bernhardt? ♣ On the contrary, is not the advertising the work of a pack of reporters, who, at their wits' end for matter, spy into her every



RUY BLAS.

movement and act to spread and distort them forth in print? ♣ ♣ What improbable stories have they not invented time and again about her! During her latest stay in America, the day she left New York for Philadelphia, the evening papers related with detail that before boarding the train Sarah Bernhardt created a dreadful disturbance at the station because she had not been given a special car, and because they had taken her pet dog to place him in the car reserved for

the purpose. ♣ The newspapers narrated further that as the train was leaving she was still stamping her foot and crying bitterly. ♣ In this circumstantial story there was not a word of truth. ♣ The friends who had accompanied her to the train saw and heard nothing of the kind. She herself had actually asked not to be given a special car for such a

short trip. ♡ Moreover, the conductor had graciously authorized her to keep her little dog with her. ♡ In fact, Sarah Bernhardt had been most gay and joyous, and exclaimed "au revoir" to her friends as the train began to move. And thus history is written, and especially Sarah Bernhardt's history. And so the good public of New York, reading the evening papers that day, exclaimed, no doubt, "What eccentricities! ♡ What an extraordinary woman!" ♡ Yes, extraordinary she is in her perfect devotion to those she loves. ♡ Of her son she said recently, "You must imagine how I love my sweet



LA DAME DE CHALANT.

daughter-in-law and my precious little granddaughter! ♡ Yet that affection takes away no atom of the love I bear my son Maurice. ♡ It does not touch that love; it remains intact." ♡ Her son, in every manner possible, reciprocates her affection, and has constituted himself his mother's defender against her implacable tormentors. ♡ Woe to the audacity that offends in this! ♡ Hence, when an outrageous article against her appears in any newspaper, she cries, "Ah, mon Dieu! if Maurice should read this!" Similar devotion she extends to all belonging to her. ♡ She is a true providence to her numerous relations. ♡ How often has she deprived herself of a street costume or of a much desired trifle to help a niece, nephew or some cousin out of dire distress! And her servants, how well she treats them! ♡ Indifferent about everything that concerns herself, she is solicitous that her



L'EPANTURE.





LA DAME DE CHALANT.

employés economize, and tries to make little capitalists of them. ♣ Once, at the time she was forced to sell her own houses, her servants were buyers of others. ♣ And since we have been led to lift a corner of the curtain that hides her private life, let us penetrate a little farther. That which seems marvelous in Sarah is the artist and the woman—the two beings totally distinct. ♣ In private conversation she speaks with the simplicity of one clothing the thoughts of her soul in beautiful language without seeking effect. ♣ She speaks with great volubility, captivating her interlocutor by the sincerity which emanates from her

entire being — one that is good, delightful, poetical and fascinating. ♣ When she allows herself moments of leisure, she spends them in painting, sculpture, and in poetry or literature; sometimes in play-writing. ♣ Although she but touches these various arts, yet she has proved herself superior in every one of them. ♣ In each of her artistic manifestations one perceives the tie binding them; they are the links of the same chain welded by her inventive genius. ♣ Yes, Sarah possesses all those gifts. ♣ She possesses them to such a degree that, had she devoted herself to painting, she would have been one of the leading painters of our time. ♣ This is the sincere opinion of connoisseurs who have appreciated her pictures when they were on exhibition at the Champs Elysées. ♣ She brings to painting her quality of ardent faith; her brilliant coloring, her composition has the vivacity which characterizes its author. ♣ Everything is ferment in this woman; ideas abound in her brain and the canvas becomes her confidant. ♣ In sculpture, Sarah felt herself from the first ill at ease. ♣ The cold exasperated her, for marble is glacial. ♣ How to warm it, and give it life and movement! ♣ Sarah has no time to spend months





with chisel in hand; Corneille, Racine, Sardou particularly, would strenuously oppose it. ♡ She has to content herself with hurried studies; in her fervor of work she takes whatever model she finds, and gives it generously the idea she conceives for it. ♡ Examine the original and then the marble after a few sittings; the likeness is striking, but the most animated, the most vibrating of the two, is the marble. ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡

Sarah's detractors at the outset sought to turn her artistic productions into ridicule, and when obliged to sustain their disparaging criticism with some evidence, insinuated that she had signed works of art that were not of her own production. ♡ Could higher praise be given than that her pictures and busts were the works of eminent artists? ♡ To imagine Sarah capable of any deceit is not to know her, for if there be a woman who has the courage of her opinions, who accepts and even claims the responsibility of her own acts, it is she. ♡ ♡



LA DAME DE CHALANT.



SARAH PAINTS.

Before leaving for America Sarah Bernhardt made a triumphal tour in the provinces and on the continent, where the great artist was obliged to improvise herself as theatre-manager, and she succeeded admirably. ♡ This woman wholly disinterested then showed that she knew, when necessary, how to discuss an agreement and to draw it up with the skill of a lawyer. ♡ She proved that if she had very often been duped, she had never been the dupe. ♡ This tour through the provinces and abroad was a triumph. ♡ The crowd



I.A. DAME DE CHALANT.

would wait for her at the close of the play to continue in the streets the applause they had given her in the theatre. ♣ She passes smilingly among her admirers as a queen adored by her subjects. ♣ And there was seen the curious phenomenon that the public unites its enthusiasm for the artist with admiration for the woman. ♣ It was feared that the calumnies which had been broadcast had found their echo in the provinces; but there was none. ♣ She was everywhere petted and adulated. The treatment she had received at the hands of the Comédie Française had shocked every one. ♣ A

critic, claiming to write with authority, stigmatized Sarah Bernhardt as having played "L'Aventurière," of Emile Augier, like the "Virginie" of Zola's "L'Assommoir."

But one must be, on the contrary, surprised at the modesty and feminine charm which Sarah's acting always combines with chaste passion. ♣ She tempers the violence of certain situations by the bewitching spell of her interpretation. ♣ Sarah received deputations from several cities where she was not able to play. ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣

In one city they would have erected triumphal arches for her; in another they wanted to illuminate the town! Sarah is radiant, but with her great joy is mingled the bitterness that she is leading a nomad's life to which she seems condemned, far



L.E.A.



from those she loves ; and she also grieves at being unable for months during her travels to create new parts. ♣ But how can it be otherwise ? During that time the receipts at the Comédie Française are considerably diminished by the reason of the absence of the great artist. ♣ For when they played "Hernani" there, which had always attracted a full house with Sarah as the magnet, the Paris public showed its indifference by its absence. ♣ But she will prove at a later day her gratitude to this same public. ♣ And then what will her detractors say ? ♣ Will they ever admit that she is indeed great ? ♣ Hardly ! ♣ Moreover, they will denounce Sarah calling her an "Article de Paris," good enough for export, and predicting that the fatigues of travel are injurious to her. To be exact, they said she could not maintain her strength to continue her wanderings with the daily and twice daily performances, thus consuming herself without restraint. ♣ Not one of these sinister predictions has been verified by facts. ♣ Sarah, self-possessed more than ever, not having to conform to counsel, gave free rein to her genius. She played her rôles as she herself conceived them ; she had no longer to defer to a manager ; she had to face the one judge : the dear public. ♣ She returned to Paris, remained but a few days, dazzling the world again with the activity and the ardor she threw into her work. ♣ Her friends rejoiced to see her so brave, for since the beginning of her career, while having met with much ungenerous criticism, she had also won sincere and devoted appreciation and a host of ardent and true admirers.

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Soon after her Paris enjoyment Sarah found herself in London. ♣ She is here the spoiled child of the stage. ♣ Since Patti no one has raised such a public furor. ♣ Those who understood French came to admire the purity of her diction ; others, who did not, came to hear that marvelous

LADY MACBETH.





“golden voice,” and to gather the same impression that Auber acknowledged at the competitive examination of the Conservatory. “This is indeed music, but music without notes, from no score.” Yet she had never publicly sung except the doggerels of the “Biche au Bois,” a fairy play produced during the first years of her career. Her vocal exploit came about in this way: After Sarah quitted the “Gymnase,” and before being able to secure an engagement elsewhere, attacked by nostalgia of the stage, she accepted a part most unworthy of her from all points of view; but it was accepted to break her forced inactivity, and that she might keep in touch with the public. This “Gymnase”

engagement was the only one wherein Sarah ever sung. In London her excited audiences raved about her “Frou-Frou.” In this play, carried away by the emotion of the situations, she shed real tears, but her spectators shed many more. In “Adrienne Lecouvreur” she recites with incomparable art the same fable of the “Deux Pigeons,” which secured the support of the distinguished jury of the Conservatory. Since Sarah’s first visit the London public considers its theatrical season incomplete without her, and their enthusiastic support has never shown diminution. From London she went to Copenhagen. There she became so popular that not only would the crowd await her coming at the stage entrance, but escorted her to her hôtel. That city, ordinarily so calm, assumed a holiday appearance. Some of the inhabitants, unaware of what was going on, asked if the excitement meant a change of government. Finally her popularity increased so that the public objected to her departure.



SARAH, SCULPTOR.







*Photographed by Reutlinger, Paris.*

thirty years? ♣ Sensations are no longer the same; souvenirs may either strengthen or weaken, according to temperament or depending circumstances. ♣ You were young then and you are old now. You were blessed with a good and frank nature, caring naught but to abandon yourself to the illusions of youth; now you have lost those illusions or have grown embittered by illness or disappointments. ♣ You had then scarcely one foot on the ground; now you have one in the grave, and decrepitude calls itself experience. ♣ Of what value, then, can your comparisons be? ♣ Moreover, it is not possible that two women so dissimilar as Rachel

and Bernhardt could have interpreted the same part in the same manner. ♣ Interpretation is governed by feeling; and rarely have there been two women more opposite in sentiment than those two great artists. ♣ Rachel was as petty as Sarah is generous. ♣ When Rachel indulged in wit, it was to the detriment of her comrades. ♣ She could not endure handsome people on the stage with her. ♣ Speaking one day of an artist whose beauty everybody was praising, she exclaimed: "You find her pretty, very well. ♣ I admit her classical profile, but such feet! She could easily sleep standing!" Sarah would have looked at the head and cared only for what it contained. ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ Every artist of talent was an object of Rachel's private hatred; she wanted to reign supreme. ♣ Her enemies — and they were numerous — thought one day that they had found her rival in Mlle. Maxime, a young tragédienne of great talent. ♣ The entire press, knowing of Rachel's treatment, agreed to applaud Mlle. Maxime, in spite of the great tragédienne. ♣ Rachel bore her anger long and silently, but finally they found themselves face to face in Lebrun's tragedy of "Marie Stuart." ♣ Rachel had the title part; Mlle. Maxime played Queen Elizabeth. ♣ In the beginning of the performance all went



smoothly, but when the scene permitted Rachel approached Mlle. Maxime, superb and impressive with real anger, to declaim her lines with a passion approaching unsimulated rage. ♣ Astonished and startled, Mlle. Maxime drew back in fright. ♣ She was scared by the haggard eyes of Rachel, who, in a frenzy, articulating with tones of sovereign disdain, screamed at her the last lines of her tirade: "I plunge my poignard in my rival's breast!" ♣ Mlle. Maxime never rallied from the shock. ♣ It was like a capital execution, and before the whole of Paris assembled. ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣

Thus Rachel excluded many artists of real value from the stage.

One only, an actor of great talent, Beauvallet, dared to withstand her. He wielded a terrible weapon, which he did not hesitate, when necessary, to employ. ♣ The weapon was his voice. ♣ When Rachel had been particularly refractory he would say to his comrades at rehearsal, "Well, we will see to-night." ♣ So in "Andromaque," also in "Les Horaces," indeed, in all great scenes in which they acted together, Beauvallet, with his formidable voice, would throw into the house accents so powerful, so metallic, that poor Rachel, exhausted by desperate efforts to make herself heard, was so conquered and crushed that she would return to the wings, where



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LA DAME AUX CAMÉLIAS.

she would promise with tears not only never to offend again, but to be kind to her colleagues, upon condition that she be allowed to be heard by the public. ♣ Beauvallet would then moderate his voice and the performance would continue peacefully. ♣ But few days were to elapse before the same discipline would be again needed. ♣ Rachel had forgotten her promise. ♣ Sarah Bernhardt is incapable of such narrow-mindedness; we have already said that all artists of ability, whomsoever they may be, have no warmer defender, nor more fervent and sincere admirer than her. ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣

Rachel feared death as much as Sarah faces it. ♣ On the occasion of her last performance in America, in Charleston, Rachel played “Adrienne Lecouvreur.” ♣ She was then consumed by the disease which was, alas! to carry her off so young; and she was making violent efforts to sustain herself until the fall of the curtain. ♣ Towards the end of the last act, when she cries : “No, I do not want to die !” she became suddenly oppressed with a vision of the hereafter. ♣ Deep anguish overcame her, which she expressed with such real emotion that the excited public, understanding her grief, sympathized with the great but unfortunate tragédienne. ♣ It was not “Adrienne Lecouvreur” it was witnessing, but Rachel herself who was fighting with death. ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣

Sarah, on the contrary, constantly faces the idea of her coming end. Yet the thought in no wise changes her habitually happy appearance. Should we not tell of that ever-ready coffin ; of her bedroom draped in black ? ♣ Rachel was superstitious ; Sarah, whatever may have been said, is religious. ♣ Her convent education taught her Christian resignation and faith ; to make allowance for people and to practise charity. ♣ Before she felt her vocation for the stage inwardly developing so irresistibly, had she not purposed consecrating herself to God and becoming a perpetual inmate of the convent ? ♣ Is it not worth calling to mind, as a parallel incident to these first emotions of Sarah Bernhardt, bred in a convent, that Gounod and Renan signed their first works “L’abbé Gounod,” “L’abbé Renan” ? ♣ And there are those to-day who argue that religious instruction, even of an elevated character, results in harrowing the mind and killing imagination ! ♣ ♣

Rachel possessed no faith ; only superstition. ♣ Once it chanced that thirteen sat down at her table. ♣ Seized with fright, she was flying from the dining-room, when, foreseeing the ridicule it would bring on her, she returned and continued in her seat, while trembling with fear. Her friends began to tease her. ♣ “Laugh all you want,” she replied ; “I believe in the fatality of the figure ‘thirteen.’” ♣ Do you remember the dinner at Victor Hugo’s several years ago ? ♣ We were thirteen at table. ♣ See what has happened ! ♣ Mme. de Girardin died in her zenith ; Mme. Arsène Houssaye, scarce in the prime of life, in the splendor of her beauty ; Alfred de Musset, dead ; dead also both the Comte d’Orsay and Perrée, such a good man ! ♣ Dead, too, my poor sister Rebecca ; Gérard de Merval committed suicide in the Rue de la



Lanterne over a gutter. ♣ As for Victor Hugo, his wife and his two sons, they are worse than dead. They are exiled! ♣ The twelfth, whose name I cannot recall, has disappeared in a tragic manner, and here I find myself, the thirteenth, at table with all of you! ♣ What will become of me?" ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣

Alas! *Musa ales* (the bird muse), as Paul de Saint Victor called her, it was not long before she also flew away! ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣

Sarah Bernhardt secured a great triumph in America, where Rachel obtained but a half-success. ♣ It must be noted that the conditions were not the same in 1855 as now.

The knowledge of the French language, acquired through study and travel, was not to be found then among the general public — a preliminary needed for the appreciation to its full value of Rachel's talent. ♣ At her first performance the great tragédienne was upon the point of losing her presence of mind through a strange little incident. ♣ The audience was listening attentively to the limpid verses of Corneille, and absolute silence reigned in the house, when suddenly a strange sound arose unexpectedly from all sides of the theatre to drown the voices of the artists on the stage. Rachel listened, curious, in the wings, asking herself, "What does it mean? ♣ Why this rustle of a thousand pinions?" ♣ The weird noise was caused by the thousand libretti — the English translation of "*Les Horaces*" — of which the attentive spectators were all turning the same leaf at the same moment. ♣ Reassured, Rachel recovered the plenitude of her talent, and finally conformed to the new order of audience and the inevitable rustle, recurring every five minutes with mathematical regularity. ♣ The French language has made such progress in America since Rachel's time that Sarah Bernhardt is fully convinced of it. ♣ The rustle of the leaves, which formerly threatened to drown the actor's voice and nearly "broke up"



*Nadarr, Paris.*

JEANNE D'ARC.



the scene where each printed page ended, is now a thing of the past. Sarah Bernhardt's impresario realized enormous receipts at every performance and the artist herself made a great deal of money. ♣ But alas! she reached Paris with hands almost empty. ♣ As quick as it was earned in America, she sent her money to France to her family, to her creditors—for she had left debts behind, among which were certain obligations assumed through excessive kindness. ♣ Her creditors, hearing of her success, showed themselves without pity. ♣ One of them had even followed Sarah to America, and he was also performing an engagement, but it was not playing comedy. ♣ He



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LA DAME AUX CAMÉLIAS.

came at the end of every performance to pocket an amount on account of his claim. ♣ And what a claim! ♣ Owing to usury and numerous fraudulent charges, the claim had attained to four times the sum originally borrowed. ♣ To tell the whole story, the same creditor was forever proclaiming his scrupulous honesty, high principles and small profits, along with his unchangeable devotion to Sarah. The great artist accepted the matter upon its good side, when she saw the scoundrel, by exclaiming: "You here!" ♣ And he, in good-natured tones: "Madame, I cannot live without you!"—probably the first time in his life he told the truth. ♣

Sarah returned, but remained only a few weeks in France, and then left for Russia; thence she went to give a few performances in Holland and Belgium. ♣ To enumerate her triumphs and tell of the receptions tendered her by the sovereigns everywhere, would be to repeat the story. ♣ Grand dukes, princes, the highest personages call on her; she asks for no audiences—she grants them. ♣ She receives with equal simplicity the great man and the poor artisan, often prompting the rich man to help the poor man out of his misery. She has produced astonishing results even in charity. ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣

In her life, so laboriously occupied as scarcely to leave time for sleep, sadness and loneliness sometimes invaded her soul. ♣ Among the artists of her company there was a certain Jacques Damala, whose aristocratic manners, beauty, refinement and artistic intelligence had attracted the tragédienne's notice. ♣ She had had occasion to see that, although he kept himself aloof, he was anxious for an opportunity to discreetly approach her. ♣ He was timid to excess. ♣ Sarah encouraged the good fellow to tell her the story of his life; the reasons leading him to adopt the stage, to leave his country, Greece, and to undertake a career hard enough for a Frenchman, but most difficult for a foreigner. ♣ Jacques Damala did not need to be asked twice to speak, and found true eloquence to make his confession. ♣ He came of a great family of Athens, and had received a liberal education. In his own country he would have made a brilliant future; as then occupied, he was fully aware that with his faulty accent and absolute ignorance of acting he would continue to witness the success of others without ever being able to take his share of it. ♣ Yet he was happy to be one of the members (if even such a useless one) of the company of which the star's name was Sarah Bernhardt. ♣ His infuriated parents had withheld his income; he was then living upon his meager salary. ♣ He had a true liking for the stage, but more yet — an irresistible sentiment for her who was his incarnated ideal, and hence he was willing to bear all privations rather than renounce living in the atmosphere impregnated with the genius of the great artist. ♣ There was such a tone of sincerity in Damala's language, his face so frank, his eyes so full of fire, that Sarah was profoundly moved. Yet she was unwilling to admit the fact to herself. ♣ At first she felt regret for having drawn forth his confession, but, having in her réper-



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LA DAME DE CHALANT.





TOSCA.

toire but few plays containing dialogues that she must have with Damala, the one that had taken place need not be held so very dangerous, since she fully purposed never again to evoke new confidences from the young Grecian. It was too late! ❧ If Damala suffered in not being able to speak to her again, Sarah suffered more in not hearing her qualities extolled by "this worm in love with a star." ❧ ❧ ❧ ❧ ❧ ❧ ❧ ❧ ❧ ❧

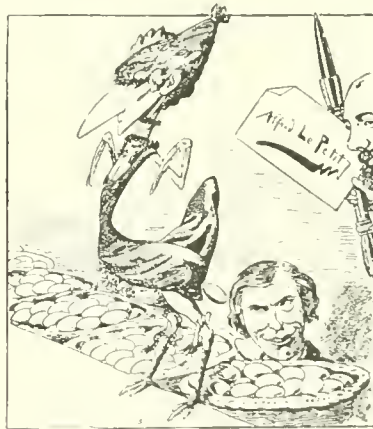
Sarah Bernhardt and Damala married in the month of April, 1882. In the meantime Sarah was very successfully conducting the artistic education of him whose name

she was going to assume. ❧ His foreign accent, which had diminished in a remarkable degree, lent a greater charm to his beautiful interpretations of the leading parts of the répertoire. ❧ In his enthusiastic desire to realize his wildest dreams, the young artist quite outdid himself; and the public—no longer occupied with Damala's pronunciation, whether it was good or bad—preferred to show its approval of his marriage by applauding indiscriminately the newly wedded pair. Their tour in the provinces having ended, Madame Sarah Bernhardt-Damala returned with her husband to Paris. ❧ Sarah then decided to become manager of a theatre, with the aid of her son; at the same time she undertook, with Damala as co-manager, the management of another theatre. ❧ One enterprise of the kind is generally quite enough to manage successfully, but Sarah essayed two of them. These two theatres soon became insufficient for her insatiable persistence, for she acted at the same time in a third theatre, "Le Vaudeville," where she created "Fédora" on December 11, 1882. ❧ At this date it had been two years and a half since Sarah left the Comédie Française, and meanwhile she had not played in Paris. ❧ Her reappearance was a triumph. ❧ As soon as the box office was opened, such a line of people was formed that those who came at eleven o'clock in



the morning to secure seats, were awaiting their turn at two o'clock in the afternoon. ♣ It was of no consequence whether the play might be good or bad: it was the great artist the crowd wanted to see. Before the curtain rose upon the first performance, every seat had been sold, even to the twenty-fifth representation. ♣ If we pronounced "Fédora" a masterpiece, we should risk being contradicted, not only by our readers, but by the author himself. ♣ However, thanks to the artist, Victorien Sardou has pocketed for this vulgar melodrama, constructed upon the falsest data, a royalty exceeding a hundred thousand dollars, nor is its earning power yet exhausted. ♣ If Sardou ever repays his obligation to her, a fortune will change hands. ♣ He is indebted to Mme. Bernhardt for Réjane. ♣ Mme. Réjane was languishing in theatres where her talent remained utterly in oblivion, when Sarah, manager of the "Ambigu," decided to give her the principal part in "La Glu," of Jean Richepin. ♣ It was a revelation. ♣ Réjane gained extraordinary success, and from that time Sardou hesitated no longer to intrust her with important parts. ♣ He even wrote a play expressly for her, as that series of detached scenes called "Madame Sans-Gêne" proves. ♣ But while Sardou stands in the front rank of dramatic authors, we shall be kept far from the highest ideal in plays. Yet what talent this clever constructor shows! ♣ The principal actors of renown die away, but the plays of dramatic authors, if of value, are handed down to posterity. ♣ With Sardou's dramas precisely the reverse happens. ♣ The value of the work has quite disappeared, although the play is kept afloat by the artist, if in the fullest possession of her powers. ♣ In our humble opinion the only work of Sardou that will pass down to posterity is his magnificent drama "Patrie." ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣

A cabal was organized for the evening of the first performance of "Fédora"; every word and movement of Sarah were scrutinized to discover a pretext for the expression of disapproval. ♣ It would have made those Bohemians happy to find a fault. ♣ But the opportunity was lacking. ♣ Sarah's triumph was complete, and if the director of



THE HEN THAT LAID THE GOLDEN EGGS.

the Comédie Française, who was present, did not applaud, neither had he the chance to object. ♣ "Fédora" had an unprecedented number of consecutive performances. ♣ The public left no empty seat up to the last night, which came in the midst of summer. ♣ During the run of "Fédora," Damala abandoned his purpose of managing the "Théâtre des Nations"; for he did not even open its doors. He reappeared at the "Théâtre de l'Ambigu" before the Parisian public and the press in "Les Mères Ennemies" of Catulle Mendès. At this theatre Sarah, lavish as directress and incomparable as stage manager, obtained the warmest approbation. ♣ The play, as selected



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CLEOPATRA.

by her, contained magnificent situations, expressed in marvelous language by the author, and the actor's interpretations were worthy of the highest praise. ♣ Damala obtained a brilliant eulogy from the press, and the teacher had the right to be proud of her pupil. ♣ In the midst of these triumphs, Sarah, with her usual goodness of heart, remembered the Sylvia of the "Passant," Mlle. Agar, to whom she now gave the principal rôle in the play "Les Mères Ennemies," which became the greatest success of this excellent artist. ♣ Mlle. Agar had given Sarah the opportunity to obtain her first victory, so Sarah gave Mlle. Agar the chance to gather

her lost laurels and retrieve her decayed fortune. ♣ It was Damala's misfortune to believe himself possessed of transcendent talent. ♣ He lived under this moral intoxication, which some of his surroundings administered, until the day came when he intoxicated himself in the usual manner. ♣ Told incessantly that a great artist could only achieve the highest flights by this double inebriety—as examples of which were cited Frédéric Lemaître and Lord Byron—Damala, weak-minded, succumbed easily to these pernicious influences. ♣ Sarah fought against them as long as possible, and sought



to tear the unfortunate man away from such base associations. ♣ But he was past help, and soon Sarah's jealous enemies became, naturally, the friends of Damala. ♣ It was too much. ♣ A separation privately arranged ensued. ♣ Damala left the "Ambigu" and entered the "Gymnase." ♣ Here he was successful, playing the "Maitre de Forges" with Jane Hading. ♣ Having had the original, he now was forced to content himself with the copy. ♣ Damala's native pride was unbounded, yet he realized this as its fall. ♣ A life of nightly revels, which he was now leading with reckless companions, was so undermining his health that but little time was needed before the unfortunate artist found himself without an engagement or a sou. ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ Then the good fairy of the past, from the "Biche au Bois," appeared to him in the form of Sarah Bernhardt.

Far from exacting any atonement for his faults, she surrounded him with touching care. ♣ She sought to rebuild his enfeebled body and solace his despairing "morale." ♣ He took once more the place at the fireside he never should have left. ♣ There are, undoubtedly, in Sarah Bernhardt's clouded life many beautiful scenes that may be recalled, but where can one be found of such antique grandeur? ♣ Endeavoring thus to bring the almost moribund back to life, she gave him, when he was stronger and able to act, the happiness of playing with her again in the "Dame aux Camélias." ♣ But it was no longer Marguerite Gautier dying of consumption; it was Armand Duval. ♣ Damala soon breathed his last, surrounded by the most tender care and affection. ♣ The funeral ceremony was imposing; the body, embalmed, was dressed in evening clothes. ♣ Prayers were said in the house, and everything was enacted according to the rites of the Greek Church. ♣ Thus, strange to say, the dead artist "assisted" at the reunion of the friends who had come to render their pious and final homage. ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ Sarah had given up the management of the "Ambigu" and become



BY ANDRÉ GILL.



the co-manager of the "Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin." ♡ There she created the leading part in "Nana Sahib," which was interpreted in company with the author himself, the poet Jean Richepin. ♡ She played also the part of Lady Macbeth with triumphant success, causing the English-speaking of her audiences to shudder at the scene of somnambulism; but Sarah was not satisfied to exhibit this scene as detached from the great tragedy in its entirety, considering it the breaking of every artistic law, and to these laws her life was most submissive.

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Sarah followed with "Théodora," which she was obliged to perform almost continuously for a year. ♡ But during this period of comparative idleness she found time to exhibit "The Infant Mars," a bustin marble; "Henriette," a cast of a bust; she also writes a play and publishes a book. ♡ Jules Clarètie, who wished her to perform the principal part of a play, "Débora," which has never been given, thus speaks of her: "Surely this feminine body, so frail-looking, this ever-ailing woman, will have spent during her career not only ten fortunes, but twenty women's lives. ♡ A robust horse-woman might have died of similar exhaustion. ♡ With Sarah it is different; the nerves, dominated by a strong and powerful will, infuse her entire being with electrical activity. ♡ To her rest seems but another form of death: that which is not paroxysmal means lethargy. ♡ She dreams of the impossible, and, insatiable, she would centuple the hours of her life by overloading those she is permitted to live."

♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡

I remember the surprise of an English teacher from whom Sarah purposed taking lessons, in order to play Shakespeare in English, as she said, "I wish to learn English very, very quickly." ♡ "Mlle. Bernhardt, I would gladly give you lessons, but I can spare but half an hour every day." ♡ "Well, then," said she, "you must try to let me have the half hour from 2 to 2:30 A. M., for it is the only time I am not engaged."

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That half hour she had only to herself! ♡ And yet, was it always hers? ♡ How often, after a performance, has Sarah been occupied with theatrical details which had to be discussed, essential to the rehearsal of some play — daylight often surprising her before she had thought of it. ♡ Nevertheless, she was ready, most probably, to repeat this revel of toil the next night. ♡ "It is a strange spectacle," an eminent critic has said, "to note that ever-active brain; that head

seething with projects and plans; that tornado of thoughts and deeds by which she carries a world in her train! ♡ It is inconceivable that, leading a life of feigned agitations which surcharge all her work, moved by violent yet simulated passions, exhaling them with a freedom and violence of speech that should exhaust her, she yet retains, in the practice of her art, the finesse of diction, the gracefulness of gesture and attitude which one can only acquire and display with a rested mind. . . . One might hunt the annals of dramatic art in vain to find a similar instance of a life of such audacity of movement as she shows to the public.” ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ Sarah incarnates the character in hand to the point of identifying herself with it, hence allows no dialogue to be spoken without consciousness, and even fervor. ♡ She had been dissatisfied with the slipshod work of several actors of her company, who were going through their scenes too carelessly, and bethought of this method to awake them from their torpor by ordering an irritating powder dropped down their bare backs. ♡ Then, indeed, they gesticulated enough, even too much! ♡ But the lesson was not in vain, and the big schoolgirl, that Sarah is, wildly enjoyed the novel punishment which had the desired effect. ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ Even when Sarah plays twice during the same day, it often happens that she rehearses also with others of the company, thus employing the interval between the two performances. ♡ But then she has her dinner brought to the theatre. ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ When she presented “Frou-Frou” at the “Théâtre de la Porte St. Martin,” the artist who played Brigard—the father of Frou-Frou—was not giving the desired airiness to his part. ♡ The actor was playing the rôle of an old beau, but one that was precise and formal. He was spinning it out instead of concentrating it; Sarah resolved to make him drink champagne to everybody’s health, however, except her own, and after that there was no more prosy work that night. He had swallowed so much champagne that he allowed a cork to explode over the public! ♡ Brigard had been playing like a teacher of elocution, but was now metamorphosed into the old “viveur,” who had forgotten yesterday’s pranks only the better to think up those of to-day and to-morrow. ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ Sarah performed quite a number of this sort of miracles, and always galvanizes her surroundings. ♡ But many artists who succeeded



when playing with her have lapsed into oblivion when away from this influence, or when they were trying to make their way alone; but Sarah bears them no ill will; often, indeed, she re-engages them, or else she aids them in some way. ♣ One of the seceders, an actress, had fallen into poverty. ♣ A benefit performance was arranged for her, but the artist herself had not the courage to invoke Sarah's assistance after deserting her company. ♣ A friend timidly undertook the mission. ♣ The first words were scarcely uttered before Sarah gave her acquiescence. ♣ "The poor woman! ♣ But I do not wish to play an old piece. ♣ I will give something unknown and unpublished.



Downey, London.

THEODORA

Yes, I will gladly give my assistance. ♣ Bill me that way immediately; it will help the sale of seats and I will be happy, very happy! But what shall I play? ♣ It is too late to think of a special attraction. Let it be some poetry. ♣ I will recite something anyhow, without entrainment; well, then, so be it!" Since something of a "scratch performance" had been advertised at first, the sale of seats had been poor; now it proceeded with a rush. ♣ The magical name of Sarah had worked the miracle. ♣ The night the benefit took place Sarah was much fatigued, having played at her own theatre a prostrating rôle that consumed her strength more than

usual. ♣ It was one o'clock in the morning when Sarah said to those who had come to fetch her in haste to the benefit: "But how is your box-office?" ♣ "Magnificent." ♣ "Well, that is all I wanted! ♣ I will not go, and, what is more, nobody will dare to ask the return of his money at this late hour. ♣ Besides, I take the responsibility of whatever may happen; moreover, I now inflict the fine of five hundred francs on myself for the benefit of the artist who has forfeited my services. ♣ She will have that much more profit, and I shall not have the trouble of going like a débutante to spout my little poem.









WE find Sarah once more a theatre manager. ♣ But she does not attempt it as a commercial speculation; on the contrary, it is well known that she is making a money sacrifice to be rid of the tutelage of an impresario. ♣ Sarah could never endure petty calculations, so foreign to questions of art, although they are the constant preoccupation of the manager, "how to make the most money," leading him widely astray. ♣ To give the works of the same author constantly, never to vary the theatre's repertory, means to expose it to the fatality of public neglect; indeed, such a course compromises the prestige of an artist. ♣ What does it matter to Sarah to earn less money, provided she has the satisfaction of presenting poetical works — works of the highest imagination? ♣ When so doing, she did not, however, abandon her usual purveyor, as we shall see. ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ The difference between the inspiration of the poet and the cool calculation of the dramatic adjuster cannot be exaggerated. ♣ In proof of which, who has not been impressed with the virile poetry of "Izeyl," or who has not been elevated to a higher sphere by the breath animating this splendid work? ♣ Its dramatic situations are evolved by simple and natural means. ♣ Why employ artifices for these ends which no longer dupe the public? ♣ And what an enduring memory is left to him who hears Sarah deliver those lines as she alone can pronounce them! ♣ After an evening passed in listening to "Izeyl," one carries away an impression not to be effaced by any hearing of a drama of Sardou. ♣ From Sardou one receives none of the sweet and languorous quiver given out by the delicious music of French verse: you get instead the well-prepared theatrical climaxes in a play built up entirely for Sarah Bernhardt! ♣ Does the artist owe gratitude to the author of "Théodora," or does the latter not rather owe it to the interpreter? ♣ We put the question and leave it to the reader to solve. ♣ Another interesting experiment of Sarah's was her representation of Sudermann's drama, "Die Heimath," or "Magda."



Her patriotic sentiments are well known; they are not false pretenses. She wished to note the effect in France of the work of the favorite author of Germany. ♣ For Art has no nationality, and no delimitations through frontiers; it breaks down all barriers. ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ Sudermann came to Paris to direct the rehearsals, and showed the way to conceive and interpret his play. ♣ Sarah never disagrees with an author about the characteristics with which he has endowed his heroine, nor to the mode in which she should be presented to the public. ♣ Sarah submitted entirely to Sudermann's advice. ♣ He congratulated her sincerely upon her faithful interpretation of his thought. ♣ What mean, therefore, the reproaches that Sarah has disguised, disfigured or violated the play? ♣ Those who preceded her in "Magda" must have been wrong, since Sarah's conception closely followed the instructions of the author. ♣ The truth is, the play of "Magda" is a matter-of-fact and conventional work, containing some interesting details of German ways and customs. It is not the male conception of a masterful brain. ♣ What the public desires in going to the theatre is to live for a few hours in dreamland. Of what use, then, is reality, or, worse still, realism, and why, above all, incarnate characters which are not worth serious study, and which are perpetually contradicting themselves? ♣ And Magda, therefore, when she returns to her father's fireside — when she comes back to the good old man, her own father (a sort of German Joseph Prud'homme, as Erckmann-Chatrian paint him) — should cease posing as a queen of the footlights. ♣ Magda is supposed to be able to play comedy; then why play it so badly? ♣ She seems not to know that her language and her toilette ought to conform to her present surroundings. ♣ She is not there to personate an artist before the public, but a daughter in the presence and home of her father. ♣ ♣ ♣ Sarah desired to appear at the "Renaissance" with Coquelin, her old comrade of the Comédie Française. ♣ On the occasion they were to play the "Amphitryon" of Molière, a singular occurrence took place. ♣ When Sarah appears with her excellent stock company every seat is taken in advance. ♣ It was supposed that the double attractions, Sarah Bernhardt and Coquelin together on the same billboard, would crowd the house for the run of the play. ♣ But this was not the case. ♣ The reason of the sudden indifference of the public being that Sarah was to play a rôle of relative unimportance.

Sarah regained prestige and applause when she reappeared in "Phèdre." ♡ But when will she give us "Andromaque" or "Esther"? ♡ And were she willing to attempt "Athalie," with Mendelssohn's music, what theatre would be vast enough to contain the spectators who would hasten to it in crowds, and for many representations? ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡

A black and white illustration of a woman with a large, ornate, fan-like structure on her back, possibly a costume or a large flower. She is looking upwards and to the left. The illustration is framed by a decorative border.

THE FRAIL SARAH AND THE HYSTERICALS.

In this ultra-Parisian comedy Sarah had given the most important rôle to an operetta artist. ♡ With habitual clear-sightedness, Sarah had discovered that Jeanne Granier was far too good for such occupation. ♡ Jeanne Granier, a consecrated artist, now charmed and





*Nadar, Paris.*

LA PRINCESSE LOINTAINE.

astonished the public, and Sarah was able to leave for America without fear; she had replaced with a rising star the one departing for the western continent. ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀

"She undertakes once more her long journeys and fatigues," says Arsène Houssaye. ❀ "This woman, so frail, so delicate looking, hurls thunder and lightning; when on the stage she is mistress of one's very soul; her voice is sometimes a caress and again a sword-thrust. Often one is led to believe the tragédienne out of breath, exhausted; she is stronger than her spectators, should she wish to strike them to their hearts' core by some word of

character and nature. ❀ Everything she touches is transformed into gold; ask Coppée if she has not given him his halo. ❀ She must have stirred Racine in his grave, for she has been his own Phèdre; she enchanted Victor Hugo when incarnating the Doña Sol of his dreams. ❀ She has her enemies and critics; but the more they shatter her statues, the more she rebuilds them. ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ But it is not among enemies we could place the eminent academician Jules Lemaître, whose play, "Les Rois," she interpreted with her habitual authority at the "Renaissance," and who thus expressed himself: "Heaven has endowed Sarah Bernhardt with extraordinary gifts: she has a strange beauty, a surprising suppleness and slenderness, and a face stamped with the mysterious grace of a bohémienne, gipsy, a something unknown, which reminds one of Salomé, Salambo, or of the Queen of Sheba. ❀ She disguises herself or makes up beautifully. Above all, she breathes that voice which is a caress, which touches one's senses like soft fingers; a voice so pure, so tender, so melodious! But the great originality of this artist, so essentially personal, is that she does what none other has dared — she acts with her whole body. With Sarah Bernhardt, it is the woman who plays. ❀ She throws her whole personality into the play. ❀ She embraces, clasps, swoons,

writhes or dies; or she winds herself around her lover like an adder. ♣ Even in the scenes where other passions are to be expressed than those of love, she does not fear to show that which is most sacred, secret in the feminine nature. ♣ These are the astonishing novelties in her acting; not only throwing her soul into the character, her whole being and all of her physical grace, but her entire sex." ♣ ♣ ♣

Could we end this study of Sarah with more convincing citations: From Arsène Houssaye, who had been the Director of the Comédie



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IN LIEUT. BETTINI'S STUDIO

Française at the time when Rachel glowed in all the effulgence of her magistral talent; from Jules Lemaître, the writer, the universally known and appreciated critic, the worthy successor of Sainte Beuve? The students of France have organized a great movement; its object, that their idol, Sarah Bernhardt, should be decorated with the Legion of Honor. ♣ No dramatic actress till now has received this distinction, but is she not the greatest of our epoch? ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣

When the company of the Comédie Française was, in 1879, in London giving its representations, Sarah prepared the design of the frontispiece for the album destined for the Prince of Wales. ♣ She chose as her subject: Glory, with unfolded wings, crowning the busts of Shakespeare and Racine. ♣ Nor did she then dream that Glory, with unfolded wings, would salute the incarnating of their "chefs-d'oeuvre" by Sarah Bernhardt. ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣









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LA TOSCA.





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IZEYL.







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GISMONDA.





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GISMONDA.







LAST ACT — GISMONDA.







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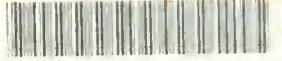
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